



Flowers Design School

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Guidelines for the Promotion of Inclusivity through Access & Equity Strategies

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Introduction

This guide aims to provide information about the needs of people from equity groups. It contains information and resources that Flowers Design School team members and other stakeholders may find useful in addressing their responsibilities in the delivery of vocational education and training (VET) to people from equity groups. While this guide does not provide all possible information about people from equity groups, it does provide some ideas and practical suggestions that Flowers Design School undertake to foster an inclusive environment.

What is Equity?

Equity is about ensuring that all people have the support that they need to access, participate and achieve to the same level. Equity is not the same as Equal Opportunity which is about making sure that people are not discriminated against and treated unfairly on the basis of difference. Equal opportunity focus on everyone having an equal start whilst equity focuses on participation and achievement to an equal level.

What are Equity Groups?

In the past certain groups of people were actively not included in education and training programs. Sometimes it was a deliberate exclusion whilst others were based on misunderstanding or lack of forethought. Historically these groups became known as equity groups in order to highlight their situations and address the disadvantage they clearly experienced and continue to experience today. Some groups of people are still under represented in vocational programs and employment.

These groups include:

- Women
- Aboriginal people
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- People with disabilities
- People living in rural and remote areas
- People without adequate literacy and numeracy skills
- Offenders (including young offenders) and prisoners
- People of low socio-economic status
- Unemployed people aged over 45 years

However it needs to be remembered that none of these groups is homogenous and there will be members of these groups who do not experience any disadvantage while others will experience multiple levels of disadvantage.

What is Diversity?

Diversity is the recognising and valuing of individual differences. Accommodation of diversity has the potential to introduce new perspectives, highlight and challenge conventional approaches and stimulate creativity and innovation. If we don't offer all people the opportunity to develop and use their skills and abilities then we are denying the

community access to much needed resources. The management at Flowers Design School recognise that as an RTO we need to move beyond focusing on legislative responsibilities to an approach that focuses on recognising, respecting and valuing a range of social and cultural differences amongst student groups which allows increased access, participation and achievement. As an RTO we value diversity, and we welcome support of a vocational education and training system that reflects the diversity of the community that it serves and the development of a competitive, skilled and diverse labour market which directly benefits industry.

What is Access and Equity?

Access and Equity is about removing barriers and opening up opportunities. In training it means ensuring that people with differing needs and abilities have the same opportunities to successfully gain skills, knowledge and experience through education and training irrespective of their age, disability, colour, race, gender, religion, sexuality, family responsibilities, or location. It means identifying and addressing the training needs of everyone.

What is Discrimination?

Discrimination is treating a person unfairly or less favourably because they belong to a particular group or category of people. It can be either direct or indirect, and to act in this way is breaking not only Flowers Design School policy but also the law.

What is Direct and Indirect Discrimination?

Direct Discrimination

Direct Discrimination is when a person is treated less favorably than another in the same or similar circumstances.

Examples of direct discrimination could be:

- Refusal to accept a student based on their sexual preference
- Giving preference to an applicant who wears western style clothes over a person wearing the hijab or turban.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination is treatment that appears on the surface to be fair or neutral, but which has an unequal effect on people.

Some examples of indirect discrimination could be:

- Requiring written assessments in English, where fluency in English is not essential
- Provision of information sessions where only a written format is provided when a learner with a vision impairment is part of the session
- Work placements or training sessions that do not to allow breaks for religious observance.

What is Stereotyping?

Stereotyping is when a generalised image of people in a particular group is promoted. For example, immediately assuming that a person with a disability must be a person who needs a wheelchair to enable them to move around.

What is Prejudice?

Prejudice is a preconceived idea or attitude often sustained by over generalisation.

What is Harassment?

Harassment is persecution or bullying based on issues such as sex, gender, race, sexual preference, impairment, marital status, pregnancy, parental status or religion.

Causes for Concern

Although people from some equity groups are represented in VET at a percentage close to their representation in the community, it is likely that they are:

Over-represented in:

- Access and non-vocational courses
- Certificates I & II levels
- Statistics for long-term unemployed

Under-represented in:

- The labour force
- Management roles
- Completion and success rates in courses and programs they undertake

Barriers to Participation

There are a number of barriers to participation that people from equity groups may experience. Some of these can be common to people from different equity groups, whilst others are more specifically experienced by a single group of people. However barriers may be compounded when people fit into one or more equity groups. Barriers may be associated with the training itself, or with the personal circumstances of the individual. Some of these are grouped below.

Barriers for women may include:

Low levels of formal educational achievement
Lack of disposable income
Lack of self-confidence
Family responsibilities and lack of appropriate childcare

Barriers for Aboriginal people could include:

Language

Low levels of formal educational achievement
Racism
Low socio-economic status
Low language, literacy and numeracy skills
Inappropriate training environments
High arrest and imprisonment rates
Barriers associated with living in rural and remote areas

Barriers for people with disabilities could include:

Lack of awareness of inclusive training practices
Attitudes of the community, training providers and employers
Physical access to training venues
Lack of personal support
Training environment

Barriers for people from a non- English speaking background could include:

Language
Racism
Emotional barriers
Lack of awareness of inclusive training practices
Inflexible programming of courses

Barriers for people from a rural and remote area could include:

Low-grade facilities and lack of other resources (staff, accommodation, transport and equipment)
Lack of information
Lack of continuity of programs in rural areas
Low socio-economic status

Supporting Equity Groups

How can Flowers Design School assist people from equity groups?

An inclusive environment does not exclude or just tolerate difference, it recognises it as an opportunity to enrich and extend opportunities for all. There are a number of aspects of the learning environment from physical access through to assessment strategies that need to be considered. Flexibility, mutual respect, communication and willingness to adapt are all critical factors.

Most learners don't want to be singled out or over protected. They just want access to services which will enable them to participate and achieve success in their training. Revising perceptions and attitudes is the first step in including all learners. Some of the strategies that Flowers Design School management have considered and implemented to address support for specific groups of people include:

- Provision of a welcoming and supportive environment

- Questioning by the trainer or assessor in an appropriate way so that the learner will not be upset or offended
- Offering flexibility in training and assessment
- Diversity in recruitment and selection
- Consulting the local equity group support services
- Willingness to change current practice for continuous improvement
- Clarifying the facts about an individual's needs

Myths and Facts

There are a number of misunderstandings that should be clarified when planning for people from equity groups.

Myth:

Equity means that everyone should be treated the same – so learners who are members of equity groups are not entitled to support services.

Fact:

Everyone should be able to achieve his or her full potential. Provision of support services may enable a learner to participate in the same way as another who does not need that support. Support services to assist learners with tasks such as reading and processing information, preparing assignments, and performing manual procedures may be essential to achieving success.

Myth:

Learners with disabilities are more likely to drop out of courses than other learners, even when given support.

Fact:

Learners with disabilities withdraw from study or training courses for the same range of reasons as other learners, but they are no more likely to do so. Recent statistics from the University of Tasmania, demonstrate that learners who have access to required services are less likely to withdraw than learners who do not have a disability.

Myth:

Learners from cultural diverse backgrounds are too time consuming and their needs are too difficult to cater for in a training environment.

Fact:

Learners from culturally diverse backgrounds are often highly motivated to attend training and overcome any barriers they may encounter during their participation. They are often very well organised and experienced in finding solutions to problems.

Myth:

Learners with disabilities create substantial costs through the need to provide extra equipment and additional staff time.

Fact:

Not all learners with disabilities will require assistive equipment or additional learning support staff. Site modifications, adjustments to course delivery and training style, if necessary, are often simple and low cost.

Myth:

Women with young children are better off if they study through external courses.

Fact:

Learning alone restricts opportunities for interaction in a stimulating social, intellectual and learning climate. Most learners need a range of opportunities for interaction during their learning.

Legal Responsibilities

Management at Flowers Design School has a legal responsibility to ensure that discrimination does not occur. This responsibility is extended to all FDS team members. Over the past thirty years legislative changes have occurred throughout Australia aimed at improving services for people who are members of equity groups. Legislation which provides protection against discrimination includes:

Commonwealth Legislation:

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Racial Hatred Amendment 1995.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992

The Disability Discrimination Act aims to eliminate, as far as possible discrimination on the grounds of a disability in areas of education, access to public premises, and employment. The definition of a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act is broad and includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, learning, neurological and physical disfigurement. All FDS team members have a responsibility to ensure that learners do not experience discrimination. Under the DDA, training providers are obliged to:

- Ensure learners with disabilities are not unlawfully discriminated against when seeking to enroll in a course of study
- Negotiate and implement any adjustments necessary to enable learners with disabilities to participate in a course to the same extent as other learners

- Ensure assessment procedures and methods are adapted to enable learners with disabilities to demonstrate the knowledge, skills or competencies being assessed

For more information the website address is

<http://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/wai-site-comments/2002Jun/att-0000/australia.htm>

The Disability Standards for Education 2003

The Disability Standards for Education 2003 were formulated under the DDA to clarify and elaborate on the legal obligation in relation to education and participation in education, training and educational services.

Reasonable Adjustment

Under the DDA it is expected that training organisations will sometimes need to make adjustments to ensure equal opportunity for students with disabilities. The nature of reasonable adjustments is such that they are designed to minimise the disadvantage experienced by learners with a disability, rather than provide learners with a competitive advantage. This methodology is enhanced by the Flowers Design School management team and is supported through the course material and resources available to the training team. Administrative, physical and or procedural modifications are taken into account. The list below shows some examples of how reasonable adjustment in training and assessment might be made:

Disability Example of reasonable adjustment

Hearing

Information presented visually and interpreted response via sign language
Consider E-mail or SMS responses.

Vision

Aural information and aural response,
High colour contrast or font size
Use of magnifying glasses or large computer screens

Physical

Ramps and lower desks
Computerised communication devices
Physical assistance with physical tasks
Teamwork to overcome physical limitations.

Intellectual

Physical prompts and signs
Colour coding
Graphics / photographs /Diagrams

Use of person to scribe responses
Talking calculators and spell checkers
Use of a person to coach through the assessment

Autistic Spectrum

Give options for assessment
Limit distractions
Reduce interpersonal or social demands of assessment tasks (e.g. teamwork)
Adapt the assessment to the student's special interest (e.g. math calculations involving bus timetables)
Consider E-mail or SMS responses

ADHD

Multiple short tests or allow rest periods
Limit distractions
Coordinate with medication regime e.g. 20 minutes after medication

Stress/anxiety

Self-paced assessment
Learning contracts negotiated
Reduce where possible 'examination type' assessments
Coach to reduce anxiety

Depression/ mental disorders

Motivational issues
Training and assessment is linked and highly structured
Coordinate assessments in line with medication regime (time of day, after food and medication)
Consider highs and lows of Bi-polar

Dyslexia/ Dyscalculia

Use of graphics and photos to augment the written word
Colour coding
Consider math's anxiety (too many numbers, e.g. $1,298,456.09 + 2,347,987.34$ reduce to $129 + 234$)

Under the DDA, training providers have the opportunity to claim that reasonable adjustments to accommodate needs of a person with a disability would impose unjustifiable hardship.

Unjustifiable hardship

The DDA does not require training organisations to admit a student when the services and supports needed by that student would cause unjustifiable hardship to the organisation.

Whether or not the adjustments that a learner with a disability requires pose unjustifiable hardship for a Registered Training Organisation will depend on the circumstances of the case. It will be decided on a case-by-case basis keeping in mind the intent of the DDA. No single factor alone is likely to constitute unjustifiable hardship. All relevant factors must be weighed up to see if, in all the circumstances, there is unjustifiable hardship. The management of Flowers Design School adopts this responsibility and an approach of individual consideration is taken to ensure a rigorous and fair decision is made.

Disclosure

Some disabilities are not visible or obvious and may be referred to as hidden disabilities. These may include mental illnesses and psychiatric disabilities. It is the right of a person with a disability to decide who and when to tell about their disability. It may be appropriate to speak to the student privately if you believe that there is a problem that was not addressed throughout usual enrolment processes. Diagnosis and treatment should be left to the appropriate personnel but is good to investigate and understand the facts about psychiatric disability and not to make prejudgments or assumptions. All people pass through a selection process to gain entry to a course. Selection criteria should only relate to the core components of the course. The DDA is not intended to provide students with a disability with an advantage for entering training. It is to eliminate disadvantage and discrimination. Generally, ability to be employed in the area of the course of study should not be a requirement of selection.

The Role of Flowers Design School as an RTO

The following list shows statements inline with FDS policy and is applicable to all FDS team members. Adoption and demonstration of these statements is a pre-requisite of employment at FDS.

- Do not make assumptions
- Treat every person on an individual basis
- Do not assume that all people from an equity group require identical support. Many people are skilled at adapting their environment to accommodate their needs (often the solutions to their needs are simple and inexpensive)
- Consult individuals about their needs before requesting or implementing adjustments
- Only ask for the information that you really need. For example what adjustments the person requires or how the disability might impact on their study.

Learner Rights

Any learner who feels that they have been discriminated against can lodge a complaint with the Anti Discrimination Commissioner or the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). Complaints can be taken to the Federal court if settlement is not achieved. HREOC can provide advice about the procedure for doing this.

Any person at FDS could have a complaint brought against them under the DDA (eg.

reception team members, individual trainers, training manager, chief executive office, or any persons representing the School.) Settlement may include:

- An apology
- An agreement to enroll a learner with a disability
- An assurance that learners with disabilities will not be treated in a certain unfavourable way in the future
- Compensation

Should a complaint proceed to the Federal Court, the training provider would need to show why reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of the person with a disability impose an unjustifiable hardship. Further information about the Disability Discrimination Act or the complaints process is available on the HREOC web site at www.hreoc.gov.au

As an equitable Registered Training Organisation; Flowers Design School Will:

- Promote successful outcomes to the FDS team to avoid stereotyping and challenge limits
- Challenge media images and misconceptions
- Organisational policies and procedures proactively eliminate discrimination
- Ensuring all courses are marketed to community organisations and advocacy groups
- Making course information available in a variety of formats e.g. Internet, print, large print.

Create a learning environment that recognises learners' needs by methods such as:

- Evaluating suitability of learning materials and assessment processes for all clients
- Ensuring support and counseling is available and easy to find
- Offering a wide range of course options within the scope of the School
- Assisting learners to identify and arrange additional services such as interpreters and trained note-takers
- Consult with the relevant stakeholder organisations
- Evaluating customer service procedures and training of the support team to ensure their responsiveness
- Ensuring qualified support is available and factored into the course costing for all learners.

National Plans and Blueprints

To address the issue of people from equity groups being under represented in vocational education and training, a number of national strategies have been developed.

- Bridging Pathways, is a national strategy and blueprint developed in 2000 to support people with disabilities in accessing VET.
- Partners in a Learning Culture is a national strategy and blueprint developed in 2001 to support Aboriginal people to access VET. Oana Mallacka is the state plan of action developed in response. Oana Mallacka has four goals, which are to:

1. Increase the involvement of Aboriginal people in making decisions about policy
2. Ensure that Aboriginal people participate in VET
3. Make sure training for Aboriginal people is flexible and culturally appropriate
4. Make sure that there are closer links between training and employment.

The National VET Strategy for Adult Prisoners and Offenders in Australia has just been released and individual states and territories will implement it.

ANTA has been overseeing the development of a National Strategy for Women in VET. Findings from these activities will be included in the new National VET Strategy for 2004-2010.

Acknowledgments Reference & Resource List

Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) www.adcet.edu.au
Aboriginal people - For policy information about training issues for and Cross Cultural professional learning opportunities (Equity Standards Branch, Aboriginal Education and VET Programs. Phone 03 62337187

Bridging Pathways <http://www.anta.gov.au/dapBridging.asp>

Choosing Your Path Disclosure: It's a Personal Decision www.uws.edu/rdlo/disclosure
Course in Inclusive Practices for the VET sector (See NTIS for providers)

Equity Standards Branch has an Access and Equity Portal providing links to employment and training related websites of interest to employers and training organisations (mainly in the disability area). <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/equitystandards/partners/>

Graduate Certificate in Education (Inclusive Practice), Department of Education
Graduate Certificate in Education (Managing Student Behavior)

Partners in a Learning Culture <http://www.anta.gov.au/dapLearning.asp>

Supported Wage System This site includes information for on-the-job support, workplace modifications, and an allowance to offset employer costs in establishing a new supported wage placement <http://www.workable.org.au/archive/sws.htm>

Workplace assessment identifies the communication and cognitive skills needed in a workplace and matches these to a person's abilities. www.crsrehab.gov.au/132.htm

"Fair go in training for people with a disability" - Meeting the Australian Quality Framework Training Obligations- developed by Queensland Government

Department of Employment and Training, version 2 September 2002. "Building Diversity- Implications of the Disability Discrimination Act for Vocational Education and Training", Western Australian Department of Training.